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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/HARDING

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: IS LE MOPS PGOV PREL PTER SY

SUBJECT: LEBANON: CODEL ISSA MEETS WITH PM SINIORA

SUMMARY

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¶11. PM Siniora described to Congressman Issa the serious damage the present conflict has inflicted on his country, as well as his hope that the American people would continue to support the people of Lebanon. Congressman Issa praised PM Siniora's leadership and courage during this difficult period, and urged the Prime Minister to be steadfast so that Lebanon would emerge from the conflict with its sovereignty and unity intact. PM Siniora said that following 30 years of Syrian domination, the Lebanese people were not about to give up their hard-earned freedom, but he urgently asked the U.S. and the other members of the international community to support Lebanon generously in its time of greatest need. PM Siniora specifically asked the U.S. to provide assistance with reconstruction, particularly in the areas of infrastructure and housing. End summary.

¶12. Congressman Darrel Issa and the Ambassador met with Prime Minister Fouad Siniora at the Grand Serail in Beirut on August 10. Senior Siniora advisor Rola Nouraddine also attended the meeting, as did Congressional staffer James Lewis and poloff (notetaker).

PM SINIORA'S OBSERVATIONS

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¶13. PM Siniora stated that most Lebanese are astounded and unable to understand the rationale for the damage that has been inflicted on their country by IDF forces over the past four weeks. Siniora, as he has numerous times in the past weeks, appealed for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an agreement that would finally, after decades of instability and violence, bring security to the border between Lebanon and Israel.

¶14. Siniora emphasized that his seven-point plan, endorsed by his Council of Ministers, had the backing of almost every element of Lebanon's citizenry, and that if the UN Security Council could adopt its principles, both Lebanon and Israel would achieve what they had long sought -- a stable border manned by their respective sovereign forces. The Prime Minister pointed out that Lebanon's approach to the proposed UN agreement incorporated the strengths of Lebanon's 1949 Armistice Agreement, and as such, would be broadly accepted by the Lebanese people.

¶15. PM Siniora acknowledged that if a UNSC resolution could be adopted, it would only be the first step in a process that would require steady nerves and the courage to face issues

that have long plagued Lebanon's unity and now its fledgling democracy. The Prime Minister said that the first few weeks after the cessation of hostilities would be critical, not only in terms of controlling military action, but in terms of humanitarian relief and initiating and funding a comprehensive reconstruction effort.

CONGRESSMAN ISSA RESPONDS

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¶6. In his comments to the Prime Minister, and later to a gathering of national and international press, Congressman Issa said the primary purpose of his visit was to demonstrate the American people's solidarity with the people of Lebanon during a time of great stress and danger. Congressman Issa applauded the courage of the Siniora Government and the Lebanese people and stated his conviction they would recover from the destruction of a war they did not start, and continue with the challenging work of building the Arab world's most dynamic democracy.

¶7. Congressman Issa also said he would bring the story of Lebanon and its people back to his colleagues in the U.S. Congress. The Congressman stated he was confident that Congress would respond generously through the various instruments of the U.S. foreign aid program and that he would closely monitor and support this effort until Lebanon fully recovered. He completed his address with the observation that Lebanon had no shortage of leaders, no shortage of unity, and would suffer no shortage of support from America.

¶8. This cable was cleared by Congressman Issa.  
FELTMAN